

WILKINSBURG BOROUGH COUNCIL  
SPECIAL MEETING  
EARLY INTERVENTION PROGRAM  
APRIL 28, 2010

The meeting was called to order at approximately 7:10 p.m. in Council Chambers; second floor of the Municipal Building located at 605 Ross Ave., Wilkinsburg, PA 15221.

Council members in attendance were Council President Eugenia Moore, Pamela Macklin, Paige Trice, Barbara Ervin, Michael Lefebvre, and Tracey Evans. Borough Manager Marla P. Marcinko was also present.

Representing Delta Development Group were Deborah J. Grass, David Soboslay, Marty Fleischer, and Nick Sohyda.

The purpose of the meeting was to present the final plan for the Early Intervention Program Financial Management Plan. Deborah Grass commented on the initial presentation back in the fall of 2009 with the topics at that time being focused on the review of financial condition assessment, trending and forecasting, and short term recommendations. She introduced the members of the management team and the focus for the presentation this evening. Specifically, Step IV Management Audit/Review, Step V Multiyear Plan Adoption (to look at priorities and plans), and Step VI Five Year Plan Implementation and Process Renewal. Ms. Grass commented that the recommendations are prioritized. There are ninety-eight recommendations in the Plan with action steps.

David Soboslay worked on Public Works, Code and the technology pieces of the report. Nick Sohyda worked on the Fire consulting piece of the report. The report was released months ago. Marty Fleischer worked on the Police Consulting piece of the plan. The main focus of Step IV is management of the departments and review of current practices/policies and recommendations for improvement.

Ms. Grass commented that capacity to support implementation must be considered.

Step IV Management Audit and Review of Departments identified structure, staffing, and operational improvements that could be made that would support a streamlined, more effective organizational structure that would be strong and flexible enough to meet the demands of a modern local government.

Ms. Grass reported that Step IV is a lengthy report. For every functional area, structure, staffing, and operational improvements were identified. The Delta Development team sought to provide recommendations with a structure that is more flexible and stronger to meet the demands of a changing government. She further commented that local governments are in a constant state of flux.

Concentration for the evening's meeting is the five priority goals. Ms. Grass commented that with each goal, critical success factors were applied, specific action steps were identified and who in each department would be responsible for implementation. Time lines were provided and the probable impact of the action. There are ninety-eight (98) recommendations for these goals. Ms. Grass commented that the recommendations are too numerous for any local municipality to achieve and further commented that a matrix of the goals will be delivered to Ms. Marcinko.

Step V Multiyear Plan Adoption identifies five priority goals. To reemphasize, for each goal the plan provides critical success factors, action steps, position or department responsible for each action step, timelines for the action steps and probable impact of the action. The five priority goals that are recommended for Plan adoption are that the Borough has a solid and self-sustaining revenue base, the Borough has a cost-containment strategy for its operations, the Borough has adopted operations, systems and practices that support a safe and clean community, the Borough has leadership in place that can promote projects and advance a strong vision of success for the organization and the community, and the Borough has a long-term plan for financing capital projects.

Ms. Grass explained the following:

Goal 1: Self-Sustaining Revenue Base strategy enables the ability to create a more diverse revenue stream by:

- Shifting focus to fee and expense recovery
- Focus on and analyze user fees—especially MSF and sewer fees which is very important. Ms. Grass commented on the fee recommendations. At budget revision time the fee recommendations were used. Ms. Grass commented this as an ongoing process to revisit every year.
- Develop a delinquent tax collection strategy to continuously analyze. Ms. Grass commented the Borough receives a good report from Portnoff Law Associates.

Questions from Council followed relating to collection of fees and taxes.

- Maintain accurate and updated database to track property owners and renters. Ms. Grass stressed the importance of maintaining this information.
- Authorize routine audits of Act 511 taxes

Goal 2: Cost Containment

- Develop comprehensive analysis process for determining the “true” cost of new hires. Ms. Grass commented that the Finance Department should be charged with this task.
- Implement recommended changes to department staffing levels
  - Use part-time employees for Police Department and DPW
  - Eliminate two supervisors in DPW

Contract the recycling operation to the City of Pittsburgh to free up DPW staffing to perform other departmental responsibilities.

- Develop a facilities and equipment long-term replacement plan
- Consider using a cafeteria plan for health benefits and paid and unpaid leave

#### Goal 2: Cost Containment – Fire Department Considerations

Mr. Sohyda addressed the section of the report relating to Fire Department operations and commented that there had been informal discussion for the department to merge with the City of Pittsburgh. Realistically there should be more firefighters in the department.

Questions from Council followed Mr. Sohyda's comments.

- Continue discussions with the City of Pittsburgh regarding the merger of fire services  
Merger would improve the quality, consistency, and depth of available fire response and would free up financial resources that can be directed to other community purposes  
Without a merger, significant resources must be expended to meet standards

#### Goal 3: Safe and Clean Community-Police Department Considerations

Public Safety is one of the most important considerations for a community's sense of well-being.

Mr. Fleischer commended the Mayor, Chief Coleman and Council for bringing in Delta Development for the study. Mr. Fleischer commented on the division in the Police Department with the forming of the SOU and morale issues. Mr. Fleischer commented on the basic need for proactive policing and conducting routine preventative patrols as opposed to response to crimes that have been committed as a cost-effective approach to policing. He further commented on having recommendations for the department which involve training from the top down. He commented on the ranks in the Police Department relating to patrol officer, lieutenant, sergeant, chief and all taking full advantage of training opportunities regardless of rank.

- Train Police Supervisors in POLEX and ADVANCED POLEX
- Disband the SOU so that there are more officers available for patrol purposes

Mr. Fleischer commented the Police Department should focus on reduction of victimization.

- Create higher visibility in the neighborhoods and commercial districts
- Assign an officer as the Public Information Officer
- Work toward formal accreditation process.

Mr. Fleischer recommended the accreditation process for the purpose of elevating credibility for the Police Department.

Mr. Fleischer emphasized the requirement for police officers to have certification in order to carry a firearm.

Ms. Macklin relayed her concern with the failure to hire part-time police officers.

Mr. Fleischer continued with a brief discussion on retaining part time police officers for future full time police officer status as he explained that part time officers during their employment have become familiar with the community and accepted as part of the community.

Deliberate indifference are two words that are very important as stated by Mr. Fleischer. He further discussed mutual aid.

Discussion followed on crime prevention. The concept of crime prevention based upon environmental design that provides natural surveillance was introduced by Delta Development Group. Windows and lighting were two items mentioned as part of environmental design. There is information available for research according to Ms. Grass from Delta Development.

**Goal 3: Safe and Clean Community-Crime Prevention Considerations**

- Community policing best practices – evaluating “real time” statistics to determine how to deploy resources to prevent crime rather than responding to crime
- Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)
  - Natural Surveillance, windows, traffic, lighting
  - Natural Access Control; single entry, maze designs, “green barriers”
  - Natural Territorial Reinforcement: appearance of occupied space, trees in residential areas, seating and refreshments in common areas, scheduling of more activities.

**Goal 3: Safe & Clean Community-Code Enforcement Considerations**

Code Enforcement was the number one issue identified from by residents of the Borough in the neighborhood outreach and business district meetings.

Mr. Soboslay commented on the importance of the Code Enforcement Department Head being knowledgeable of the Planning Code, Zoning Code, and the UCC Code and providing leadership to the personnel of that department.

- Hire a director for Code Enforcement Department
- Revise and update occupancy permit program. One way to improve housing stock is through occupancy permits. Record keeping was cited by Mr. Soboslay as a very

important issue. He commented on being able to pull ten years of permit history from the database currently being used by the Code Enforcement Department.

- Evaluate and expand third party services for commercial plan review and new construction inspections. The Borough currently utilizes a third party for services.
- Develop turnkey packets for residents, contractors, and developers. Turnkey packets, as explained by Mr. Soboslay, are packets prepared to provide information on application in advance of the application being made. The packets would contain all the necessary requirements/specifications for the permit being applied for. It was suggested the packet materials be made available on the website.
- Utilize summer inspectors for property maintenance violations. Crossing guards are an option.

Ms. Grass commented that the hiring of a director for the department of Code Enforcement requires a person oriented toward strong code enforcement without having to be certified in BOCA codes etc. She further cited the third party inspectors as being very capable of handling the inspections they currently perform. She further cited the summer inspectors as one of her favorite programs in showing a proactive approach from the Code Enforcement Department for sending notices to residents for uncut grass, broken sidewalks, abandoned vehicles etc.

- Commit resources—refocus and re-energize the department

#### Goal 4: Leadership and Structure

Mr. Soboslay recommends the hiring of a director for the Department of Public Works as employees are desirous of having a director that provides leadership and structure to their department.

“The lack of stability in key positions in the Borough and the resulting lack of institutional knowledge during the transition periods is the single most important barrier to the effective operation and organizational health of Wilkinsburg’s local government operation.” Ms. Grass commented on the high turnover in key positions and the impact it has on departments with disrupting the department and culture and the perceptions by residents and outside agencies.

- Control transition in key positions whenever possible—hire very carefully, with putting the right people in the right positions; and fire thoughtfully. Ms. Grass cited that stability in an organization goes directly to the health of that organization.
- Consider the appointment of a Home Rule Charter Study Commission to explore alternative local government structures. Ms. Grass reminded Council the Borough Code was written in the 1950’s and doesn’t work very well in most communities. The public decides by ballot whether or not they want a commission; members are appointed at the time of the election (time the question is put on the ballot) with commission

members on the ballot. There is a minimum of nine months to a maximum of eighteen months process time.

Ms. Grass suggested scheduling an annual strategic visioning session that results in the development of annual objectives, organization performance reviews and process renewals which bridges to the implementation piece. The process continues with the suggestion to take a strategic vision approach/strategic management approach and continually look at new objectives and to evaluate whether those objectives are being met and continually renew that process.

Goal 5: Long-Term Capital Planning (CIP) is an integral part of a local government's ability to care for its facilities and infrastructure. One of the primary government responsibilities is to take care of the infrastructure.

- Assign the CIP process to the Infrastructure Committee
- Require department directors to conduct an inventory of capital assets
- Identify projects, budgets, schedules, and priorities
- Identify funding sources to support the CIP
- Investigate funding and borrowing alternatives, update annually –distribute widely.

#### Step VI Implementation and Process Renewal

Ms. Grass commented these priority goals have been identified; and the following are steps the Delta Development Group believes need to be done in moving forward.

Successful implementation must include important key steps.

- Identify priority goals
- Develop action items
- Establish annual objectives
- Assess the structure
- Identify resources-- how much money does it take, what people do we need etc.
- Develop an evaluation framework
- Measure organizational performance
- Take corrective action

This approach is typical of a strategic management approach.

#### Goal 6: Building the Capacity and Structure to Support Implementation

- Appoint an Implementation Manager who will develop an implementation schedule and work with Council/Committees to establish priorities, monitor progress, provide

technical assistance and undertake a funding strategy process. Ms. Grass cited these items don't get done without the appointment of a manager.

The question was raised by a member of Council as to whether a consultant is needed to serve as the implementation manager. Ms. Grass responded that, at the beginning phase of the process, it should be decided whether a person, organization or consultant needs to be involved. It was suggested by Ms. Grass that there be an Implementation Committee appointed by Council to have significant authority and resources to work with the Implementation Manager. Ms. Grass suggested that the Oversight Committee be considered for the Implementation Committee to perform the following:

- Work with the Manager and Council to prioritize action items
- Work with the Implementation Manager to implement identified projects and programs
- Build capacity through volunteer recruitment
- Conduct regular evaluations of progress
- Assist with identifying resources and investment

**Goal 7: Detailed Funding Strategy to Support Resource Allocation**

Resource allocation is a central management activity that supports successful implementation.

- Identify resources necessary for each action item. Without this step, the recommendations are not realized.
- Develop funding matrix that matches items to possible funding
- Prepare briefing material and message statements
- Prepare and submit funding applications
- Build political support for projects
- Assist with post-award process and administration of grants
- Manage project schedules
- Evaluate funding success regularly

These steps are all a part of funding strategy to determine where the resources are and how to tap into them.

Ms. Grass concluded the presentation with a quote from Abraham Lincoln. "If we know where we are and something about how we got there, we might see where we are trending—and if the outcomes which lie naturally in our course are unacceptable, to make timely change."

Council thanked Ms. Grass for the presentation.  
The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:05 PM.